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SUBJECT: Renewed Interest in Barbados for AmCham

(U) 1. SUMMARY: Embassy Bridgetown on January 23 hosted a reception for the American business community in Barbados to generate interest in renewing an AMCHAM. 30 business people from a wide variety of American owned companies, some big international firms such as FEDEX and IBM, and some niche manufacturers, attended. The event, which also explained the ACE awards and a briefing from the Regional Security Officer (RSO) pertaining to the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), sparked interest in jumpstarting the AmCham concept, which had atrophied some years ago. As we move forward in Barbados, we are planning similar events in the other EC countries we cover to stimulate interest in AmChams there as well. End Summary

2. Embassy Bridgetown launched a regional AmCham for the Eastern Caribbean in 2000. It was active until 2003 when it quit functioning due to change in leadership of the organization and a lack of commitment by the membership to make it a viable organization. The AmCham formed in 2000 did not register with or seek accreditation with the American Chamber of Commerce in Washington, DC and thus was not an official AmCham. As a result of this neglect, the Eastern Caribbean is the only significant economic space in the region without an AmCham presence. Since the fall of 2007, we have been meeting with local American and Barbadian business people to explore the possibility of reestablishing an AmCham and to encourage them to formalize the registration process with the U.S. Chamber.

3. There are some 60 American-owned companies in Barbados. These firms run the entire gamut of industries, with banks, financial service providers, accounting firms and the like being the most common firm represented here. There are a number of American-owned hotel chains in Barbados and several large scale American-owned resorts are being developed. There are also a number of smaller, niche manufacturers active in Barbados. There are a number of other companies that would qualify for potential AMCHAM membership as they are either managed by an American citizen or do a significant amount of business with the United States, including significant U.S. sourcing of their equipment.

4. Based on the interest shown in the prelaunch reception and on conversations with local businesspeople, we are confident that an AmCham can be successfully re-launched in the Eastern Caribbean. We are working now with attendees from the January 23 event and others who have expressed strong interest to encourage the selection of an initial Board of Directors for a new AmCham. After the board is selected and meets, we will be working with them to obtain formal accreditation with the U.S. Chamber. We will also look for creative ways to support and highlight their presence and activities, inter alia by sending USG visitors to meet with them and serve as guest speakers for AmCham-hosted events.

5. In addition, we are planning commercial outreach trips to each of our other islands over the next six months. During these trips,

we will meet with the local American business community and encourage them to form mini-AmChams in their respective countries. Eventually, we would hope to see some formulation of a regional AmCham as an umbrella organization with local chapters in each of the countries we cover. So far, there has been interest expressed in St. Kitts and Nevis and in Dominica for establishing some sort of AmCham-type body.

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